

#15

Chu Lai
30 May 71

Dear Family -

A rather quiet morning for once...which is rather surprising and probably ominous; I can't believe that I have this little work to do. I've received one pair of glasses, oddly enough the tinted ones, which I thought would take the longest to arrive. The books from the Library arrived; I gave them to one of our liaison NCO's to take up to the hospital (after taking a couple for myself; I noticed that someone in the office took out Lillian Gish's memoirs - a rather interesting choice, all things considered). Please extend my thanks.

The food package and your book package also got here, somewhat to my surprise, inasmuch as we've been having a bit of trouble with the mail service lately. However, all contributions are gratefully received.

I've been re-reading the Prydain books, with a great deal of pleasure. Also that Rats, Lice, and History, whose author seems to be a garden variety biologist trying to come across as a renaissance man. The book was written in 1935, and some of the asides are, in their own way, quite remarkable. He is somewhat horrified (can one be "somewhat" horrified?) at Elliot's poetry; his reaction is, crudely stated, "how can such an intelligent man write things which I cannot understand and which are therefore meaningless?" Despite a certain shallowness, the book is entertaining in its willingness to treat just about anything; typhus really doesn't come into it until more than 3/4 of the way through.

Alexander's books (series, pentology, whatever) are very simply a delight. Part of the pleasure, I suppose, is seeing the bits and pieces of MacDonald, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien that he's managed to assemble. All of them are quite distinct as to their origin (or so it seems) but transformed - not out of recognition, but into another of their inherent possibilities. (Which sounds rather as though it means nothing and extremely pompous; that's what happens when I work myself into a cul de sac, writing and not thinking ahead to what I'm going to say next. However, I think you can infer what I was trying to say.) Anyway, they have become, for now, my lunch-time books - something to supply a peacefulness not to be found elsewhere in the day.

Guess what's on sale at the PX? The Chronicles of Narnia. My goodness.

The office just got a new dog, now named "Sham." One of the liaisons brought him in on a flight and gave him to one of our people. Right now he (the dog) is about two weeks old, and very appealing, running around on someone's desk top. A few hours ago, when he was first brought in, he was obviously scared out of his wits and would do nothing except, when approached, tremble and retract himself into a (doggy) foetal position. However, after a little while (a good part of it spent asleep on my chest with his snout tucked into my armpit) he's become used to the area and the people here.

Judging from the way that GIs lavish affection on animals, and the number of people he's just adopted, Sham will probably be one of the ~~most~~ spoiled animals around. There's hardly anything wrong with that; the relationship with an animal is reciprocal in an odd sort of way, at least in this environment. I suppose the dog is a mirror that allows one to enjoy one's own affection. However, no half-baked generalities.

That's a good il - my work's catching up with me. See my love!

A handwritten signature, possibly 'Bob', enclosed in a decorative oval.